NEWS AND COMMENT IN THE WORLD OF ART

By HENRY McBRIDE.

THERE is a confident expectation in the minds of many that the arts of sculpture and portrait painting will profit largely by the war, but it appears to be too soon to measure results. The portrait exhibition by the National Association in the Henry Reinhardt & Sons Gallery, like all the other public exhibitions of the winter, shows the strain of the time, and while all will be glad that the association decided to exhibit, few will pretend that we have any great cause for national exultation in the event.

I got very much depressed by a sort of international inspection of these pictures that took place while I was making mine. Two French officers of imposing mien were led in by a young American lady who seemed to be *au courant*, for she kept saying: "Ca, c'est un Randall Davey." "Ca, c'est un Mary Foote." "Ca, c'est un Robert Henri." But the officers, who were majors or colonels at the least, took no manner of notice of these names and even less notice of the pictures. The fair cicerone, as they say in novels, tried to put in a word for the full length of "Miss Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance," by Robert Henri, but the officers, with the ruthlessness they had learned, no doubt, on the battlefields, brushed her peremptorily aside—she was very pretty—and made expectantly toward a modest little brown picture of a girl in the corner, but when they came close to it they said "Non, non," and rejected that, too.

When one is trying to look on the bright side of things, encounters like that are disturbing. I got no manner of line on their tastes, as I should have done had they fastened even ever so slightly upon any of the portraits. I wished afterward I had followed them out into the corridor to have seen how they reacted to Ben Ali Haggin's "My Baby's Portrait of His Mother," but I had been so petrified by the swiftness of their decisions that I was incapable of stirring from the eighteenth century sofa from which I had been viewing poor Miss Ruth St. Denis before the interruption.

But I don't see why I should say "poor." It is not her fault, is it? Miss St. Denis has always hitherto been regarded as good material by artists, and if there is anything in the nature of a debacle in regard to this portrait it must surely be saddled upon Mr. Henri, mustn't it? But I should never have used the word debacle had not the French officers acted as though it were a debacle. I won't use the word now. It was not a debacle. It is simply Miss St. Denis and Mr. Henri at their worst. And when Mr. Henri is at his worst, something humorous is evoked. One is pleasantly entertained by M. Henri at his worst, but one is never amused by a debacle.

Miss St. Denis's costume for the Peacock Dance is worthy of the pen of Thackeray, in fact demands such a pen, so nothing like justice may now be expected for it in literature. To an amateur it would seem difficult to dance in, as it seems all train and nothing else; but so much of the modern dancing seems like prancing that possibly Miss St. Denis moves nothing above the knees. Or perhaps she does it all with the neck. Miss St. Denis is long everywhere, but especially in the neck. Mr. Henri emphasizes this trait unnecessarily. Miss St. Denis's head and neck seem to rear endlessly, like an unfolding ostrich's, into the heavens, in this picture. But this would be nothing had not the artist given such an odd shape to the head and placed it so that it could not articulate upon the vertebræ that do actually support it in the real Miss St. Denis. Mr. Henri has shaped Miss St. Denis's head like an egg. Actually! Is not that amusing? It is the sort of drawing that one does sometimes on eggs for Easter. Yet it looks like Miss St. Denis, too. Perhaps she won't mind. People in public life view these things differently. What would be death to Mrs. X (heavens, in my haste I almost mentioned the name that the lady hates to have appear in the newspapers), would be life to dear Miss St. Denis.

Of all these portraitists the only one who may be said to have improved upon past performances is Mr. Adolph Bone, whose study of Mr. S. Franklin Sharpless will be found acceptable. It is a straightforward and honest study of a forceful American type. Sargent would have got more flash from the eyes, no doubt, but then Sargent, in the old days, when he was going well, made everything flash. Mr. Davey has been ambitious and has painted a full length of a girl with a mantilla. His knowledge of form has not kept pace with his aspiration—nevertheless it is nice that he tried. None of the others exerted themselves very much, but here's hoping they will next year. Some of those French officers may still be hanging about, you know, and it would be fun to give them a jolt.

Contemporary Art in Parish House

An exhibition of contemporary American art has been arranged in the Parish House of the Church of the Ascension by the following committee: Miss Cecilia Beaux, Miss Content Johnson, Miss Juliette Thompson, Mrs. Philip M. Lydig, Mrs. George Ethridge, Mrs. Albert Sterner and Dr. Christian Brinton. It is promised that this is the first of a series of such exhibitions.

Mrs. Lydig and Miss Beaux have both written little prefaces for the catalogue. Mrs. Lydig says:

"Religion and beauty are so inseparable, it is meet to use the parish house for exhibiting art. Under the shadow of the Church of the Ascension, itself a treasure house of such beauty as La Farge's inspiring painting of the Ascension, St. Gaudens's classical altar, the platform of progress and the sympathetic haven of all those who are heavily burdened, the rector has sought during the many years of his pastorate to assist the young artists by welcoming their canvases to hang upon these walls. They have warmly responded, thirty of our representative masters are lending their paintings to the Parish House, a fitting answer, and one fully appreciated. The opening exhibition is the first step toward a semi-annual exhibition. To our busy life, so full of commerce and haste, the Church of the Ascension gives us prayer, music, art—symbolic of the Trinity and of unity."

Miss Beaux writes:

"Not the least characteristic feature of American art is a certain spirit of moderation. Our painters usually avoid extremes. You seldom meet in the average American art exhibition those vivid emotional or technical adventures that one so frequently encounters abroad. An innate respect for tradition, for recognized limitations alike of mood and manner are disclosed in almost any survey of native artistic production. It is with the aim of displaying to advantage this particular attribute that the current exhibition has been planned.

"While it would have been possible on the one hand to have been more academic and on the other to have been more radical, it was decided to illustrate by a few typical examples the normal development of contemporary painting. The work of the exhibiting artists, sound in observation and expression, stands upon its own merits and makes its own appeal. You will note upon the hospitable walls of the Parish House fresh color and due regard for plastic form. It is the outward and visible world that in the main has attracted these painters. And in its transcription into pictorial language they have remained true to certain ideals, both æsthetic and social, which we instinctively recognize as national."

It might be possible to tilt a lance with Miss Beaux except that one does not tilt lances with ladies. But "our painters usually avoid extremes" makes one shudder. Why should they? And do they? I fear Miss Beaux should have said, "Our academies avoid extremes—they love the humdrum." But what saves Miss Beaux from the argument is that the committee of which she is a member has distinctly gone in for extremes. Mr. Sargent's "Nonchaloir" is extreme. Mr. Weber's "Musicians" is extreme. Mr. Rockwell Kent, Mr. Davies, Mr. Halpert, Mr. Moffat are extreme. It is quite a meeting of extremes. So much the better, and I hope Miss Beaux will attend the show. She may find that it is possible to be extreme and American.

For getting what he set out to get Mr. Sargent's "Nonchaloir" is perfect. To be sure he did not set out for much—nothing but the outward aspects of a pretty girl who has flung herself into a cushioned seat. There was no question of soul nor of mood, but merely the physical facts—the sort of thing Mr. Harrison Fisher does with less skill for our popular monthlies. But technique of such a quality always commands a glance. The values have been recorded with the certainty of a machine and the still life of the desk has been just sufficiently blurred to keep it down in its place. Flatten also blur things, and somewhat in that way.

Mr. Weber in his "Musicians" has gone Picassoward with a vengeance. The date is not legible, so it is impossible to state whether it is a recent experiment or not. It is rich in color, clever in composition, and with more than a suspicion of humor. Mr. Weber's musicians are not beauties, but then musicians, as concertgoers know, seldom are.

After having already exhibited a little irritation with Miss Beaux, perhaps I oughtn't, yet I must, insist that she too in her "portrait" seems to have carried her particular bent to an extreme. Miss Beaux's great fault is that she gets so lost in her study of values that she does not open her eyes to life, and in the present work she forgot the sitter so completely that the values she preferred gave the unfortunate model an unpleasant sniff.

"South America," by Charles S. Chapman, a panel in the frieze "Continents of the East Contributing to Victory," which is a feature of the decorations on Victory Way for the Victory Liberty Loan.

Portrait of S. Franklin Sharpless of Philadelphia, by Adolph Bone. Portrait Society, Henry Reinhardt & Sons' Galleries.

Costume Drawings by Purcell Jones

The decorative costume drawings by Purcell Jones, now on view in the Knoedler Galleries, are quite delightful. Mr. Jones does these things better than any of those who drank at the fountain of the Ballet Russe. He began in the Ecole Bakst, but has branched out not only into new colors, but into new lines.

The new group of drawings have not been used in theatrical productions. They have not even been fitted to particular plays. Mr. Jones has become a free lance and for the moment allows his fancy to play through all the centuries and around all the Heinesque and Beardsleyist themes. Mlle. Toutefois, Mlle. Maisonrien and Mlle. Lichvienski all wear crinolines, and crinolines of the most rhythmic and effective sort.

La Rosalba and Mme. Frescito might have stepped forth from the pages of Cazenova, and possibly did, as no one can keep in their heads the names of all the fair that Cazenova flirted with. If they didn't, then Mr. Jones must dip into Cazenova a bit. He will find there matter worthy of attention.

While Mr. Jones seems to have renounced the stage, there is no reason why the stage should altogether renounce him. Some of these imaginary ladies are so poetically garbed that it seems a pity that some of our dancers and vaudevillistes do not seize upon these costumes. Mr. Jones has such a talent for the flounce in particular that it would not be at all surprising to see it brought into fashion again.

"The Gray Girl," by Ben Ali Haggin. On exhibition galleries Henry Reinhardt & Son.

Notes and Activities in the World of Art

An admirer of George Bellow's work that was recently shown in the Knoedler Galleries asked him to paint some more atrocities. Mr. Bellows is said to have replied: "I'll Goya!"

Business appears to be going on as usual in Hongkong, China, if one may judge by the following announcement which has just been received by THE SUN:

HONGKONG, March 15, 1919.

DEAR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—We have pleasure to advise you that by arrangement with the Tosa Art Studio of Yokohama in Japan, we are as usual having an exhibition of Japanese modern water color pictures.

It is our utmost honor to exhibit in presence of ladies and gentlemen in so mild springtime such elaborate and nice vernal works limned by prominent artists in modern Japan and newly arrived of late.

Price of pictures ranges from $2 to $50.

We hope you will favor us with an inspection of this excellent collection of water color pictures. Yours faithfully, NIKKO & Co.

HONGKONG HOTEL BUILDING.

The following letter by Mr. Zorach, written to the editor of the *American Art News*, does him so much credit that it is quoted entire. It breathes the ardent spirit that keeps the best of our young people going, and those who cannot sympathize with the young are bigots:

DEAR SIR—There is a lull. The war has disorganized the world. Art interest has waned. People are worried about what the next moment will develop in our political and economic life. Very few are visiting the galleries. No one is selling pictures. Almost all the younger artists and students have been absorbed by the war and war activities. Only the old fogies have had the opportunity to stay at home and niggle away with their paints. The old cry arises, "The Modern Fad in art is dead!" Even the dead stick their heads out of their holes and make a feeble squeak, "Modern Art is dead!"

Suddenly, without warning, a huge cubic meteor falls from the sky and knocks the dead men back in their graves. One of these mornings you will awaken and find yourselves hit by a great Modern Art Exhibition, or by an organization of Modern Painters and Sculptors. Beware! The day is coming when you will be pushed back into your graves and have to stay there.

Modern Art is dead! You might as well try to cover the sun with a cheesecloth or stop the world from going round. Modern Art is the living spirit of the New Age. The old age is gone, the old art is dead, only Modern Art is alive. You have only to look around you. Where are the shining lights of the Academy? The strong old men are gone, only mediocrity reigns. There is a rumor that even the Academy is thinking of electing one of the most modern moderns as one of their number to give it a bit of life. The American Luxembourg exhibition is spotted with Modern Art. The good old conservative British Government sends "Cubist" war pictures to America.

Is modern art dead? Has the world stopped? No, it's still whirling, going as fast as ever, and so is life—always changing and progressing. The dead are surrounded by dead, and so they feel everything is dead. But to the live ones everything is alive, and always will be.

Respectfully yours,

WILLIAM ZORACH.

Important additions have been recently made to the scope of the Brooklyn Museum exhibition of lace and embroideries, which opens on Tuesday next, including a loan of fifty or sixty pieces of rare merit from a noted collector in Philadelphia, and various purchases by private parties, made at the recent Benguiat sale. Some of these are a gift to the museum from Miss Theodora Wilbour of New York city; others, purchases made by the museum at this sale, and still others loans or gifts of pieces from this sale as may be determined later on. In the last mentioned class is a Venetian Gothic point lace and linen alb which was one of the most important pieces of the Benguiat sale. Miss Theodora Wilbour's gift includes a seventeenth century English court mantle of velvet decorated with gold embroidery and the museum purchase consists of a magnificent set of English sixteenth century "petit-point" embroidered bed hangings, six in number. Recent museum acquisitions of early American furniture, so far unexhibited, will also be shown.

A letter from the French Embassy to the United States, addressed to William Henry Fox, director of the Brooklyn Museum, gives the advice that the French Ministry of Fine Arts has authorized a gift to the museum of the two large Albi vases known as Les Cygnes (the swans). These vases stand seven feet high from the floor with their pedestals. They were decorated by Blenville, and were executed at the historic government manufactory at Sevres. This gift is mentioned as being made in recognition of the hospitality of the museum in caring for the French national loan collection of art which was exhibited at the museum, and in its custody during the war, and which has recently been returned to France. These vases will be installed and shown in connection with the current exhibition.

For the twenty-third anniversary of the founding of Carnegie Institute a number of exhibitions have been arranged in the galleries. A collection of fifty paintings by Abbot H. Thayer is being shown, among them being ten works lent by Charles L. Freer of Detroit, and with these are Mr. Thayer's studies in color concealment, popularly called "camouflage."

These combined collections represent the life work of Mr. Thayer. Their exhibition is in accord with the plan of the institute to present from time to time the works of eminent American artists within the lifetime of the painters chosen for this distinction. In conjunction with each exhibition of this character there will be published a brief life of the painter, with an authoritative and complete list of his works.

An exhibition of seventy-four important works from the Canadian National Collection has been graciously lent by the board of trustees and the director of the National Gallery of Canada at Ottawa. The collection is comprehensive in character, including not only old paintings but many works by modern men of great ability. The contribution of this important collection by the National Gallery of Canada is a graceful act that places the Carnegie Institute under a debt of gratitude.

A memorial exhibition of works by Henry Golden Dearth is also presented. In recognition of Mr. Dearth's ability and achievement in the field of American art this collection is being shown in a number of the important art institutions throughout the country. Mr. Dearth is represented by a very beautiful, though small, painting in the Carnegie Institute. He is also represented in the Metropolitan Museum, in the Art Institute of Chicago and in many other public collections.

Of peculiar interest to citizens of Pennsylvania will be the collection of drawings and studies by Miss Violet Oakley. Miss Oakley's important decorations in the Capitol at Harrisburg are well known to art lovers throughout the country.

The recent accessions to the department of fine arts will also be presented for exhibition in accordance with the usual custom. The collection will include many rare and valuable prints which have been added to the institute's print department and distinguished works in sculpture by Augustus St. Gaudens, George Grey Barnard, Frederick MacMonnies and Antoine Louis Barye, which have been added to the department of sculpture.

The memorial exhibition of paintings by Henry Golden Dearth will close May 15 and the exhibition of drawings and studies by Miss Violet Oakley will close May 25. The other collections will continue on exhibition until June 30.

Americans, again, have signed the wood engravings here shown: Timothy Cole, R. Ruzicka, Charles M. Johnson, J. J. Lankes. Likewise American are the designers of the book plates: Franklin Booth, E. B. Bird, E. D. French, R. Ruzicka, A. N. Macdonald, W. F. Hopson and Jay Chambers. Mezzotints in color by W. G. Blackall and C. R. James emphasize the interest in this kind of work, particularly in England, since the days of Morland.

A pendant to Lepere's "Amiens" is formed by Wenzel Hollar's seventeenth century etching of Antwerp, a large plate by that honestly capable craftsman. The next century is represented by a case full of small portraits in engravings by Mathey, the elder Ravenet, Alix, Perefixe and Retz. And to these are added a number of similar portrait plates lent by Mr. Edward Bement. They include work by T. de Leu, Nanteuil, Ant. and Hier. Wierix, Van Schuppes, R. Vaughan and Crispin de Passe.

A different world is opened up by the selection from the Japanese prints given by Samuel Colman, which range from the primitives to the nineteenth century and include both black and white and color prints. Moritsuni, Yeishi, Masanobu, Sukenobu and Hokusai are to be seen in characteristic examples.

Finally there are some exhibits especially of historical interest: Early views of San Francisco, A. H. Ritchie's large steel engraving of "Martha Washington's Reception," S. L. Smith's engraved reproduction of Paul Revere's "Colleges in Cambridge," G. F. C. Smillie's steel-plate portrait of President Wilson, and some drawings by Louis Maurer. Maurer was intimately connected with lithographic production during what may be called the Currier and Ives period and later, having done, for example, many of the cartoons during the Presidential campaigns of 1856 and 1860. One of the present drawings shows the grand stand on the old Union Race Course, with Hiram Woodruff and others driving trotting horses, and his large lithograph "Preparing for Market" illustrates a farmyard in New York State over sixty years ago. It will be seen, therefore, that this year's show is more miscellaneous than ever, and if the visitor will but choose what he likes and pass the rest, various tastes may be satisfied.

The fifth annual exhibition of paintings of American artists, comprising 120 pictures by 108 painters, opened at the Detroit Museum of Art with a reception and opening view on Wednesday evening, April 16.

A small gallery has been devoted to the recent work of Jonas Lie.

The catholicity of choice is particularly noteworthy. Samuel Halpert, Albert Sterner, Eugene Higgins, Kenneth Hayes Miller, Leon Kroll, George Bellows, Maurice Prendergast, Charles Reiffel, John Sloan and Eugene Speicher all have interesting notes that give a sparkle to the exhibition. The collection was chosen by Director Clyde H. Burroughs from exhibitions in the East and from the studios of the artists.

The London *Observer* hears from one of its readers, W. M. Gray of Warwickshire, of a portrait of Robert Burns, hitherto unreported, yet believed to be the work of William Anderson, 1757-1827.

The portrait is a half length study, measuring 25 inches by 30 inches, painted on an eighteenth century canvas, with an eighteenth century stretcher, in an eighteenth century frame. Mr. Gray regards it as one of the originals from which Skirving made his drawing of the poet, and he believes its having been overlooked is to be accounted for by the fact that the portrait of Burns by Alexander Nasmyth, although Sir Walter Scott thought very little of it, is almost a tradition, there being few homes in Scotland where there is not a representation of the Nasmyth portrait in some shape or other.

Mr. Gray came upon the portrait early last year in Dundee, when he was invited by an artist there who was an acquaintance of his to view a portrait of Robert Burns. The picture was in its original state, with an eighteenth century stretcher and eighteenth century canvas; it had been relined, but the liner had only carried his canvas about half an inch under and beyond the interior lines of the stretcher. Mr. Gray purchased the portrait and in January it was brought to London to be cleaned. Mr. Gray had the lining stripped off in his presence, and its removal revealed on the back of the eighteenth century canvas the words distinctly painted in large lettering, "William Anderson, Painter, A. D. 1757—1827."

There is also on the stretcher and frame confirmation of a statement made by the Dundee artist that the portrait had been publicly exhibited at a historical exhibition in Dundee some years ago, for there is a small label bearing "Robert Burns, oil painting, lent by Colin McPherson." Mr. Gray understands that Mr. McPherson was the previous owner of the picture, and it had hung in a country house in Forfarshire for many years.

Mr. Gray believes that the portrait was probably painted at a very few sittings on the poet's arrival in Edinburgh in 1786. It seems to have been painted rapidly. There is a long sweep of the brush in the painting of the dress. Satisfied with his portrait when he had finished the head and shoulders, Anderson appears to have painted the rest with a full brush and rarely touched his canvas twice.

Mr. Gray does not claim that the portrait has great merit, but "it has a certain realism that seems to bring us nearer to the man than any of the other portraits," and in contrast with the Nasmyth portrait, "which is almost a tradition, does not represent the poet as he is known in his life and works."

"Victory Bearing Away the Infant Future," by Cecilia Beaux. On view window of M. Knoedler & Co.